

The Function and Training of Missionaries in the Light of the Madras Conference

A SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS AT HARTFORD
MARCH 31 AND APRIL 1, 1939

UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE KENNEDY SCHOOL OF MISSIONS
OF THE
HARTFORD SEMINARY FOUNDATION

(This report is an edited combination of summaries of the three sessions, prepared by Miss Mabel E. Emerson, Miss Marcia Kerr and Professors E. E. Calverley, D. J. Fleming, C. P. Groves and Dr. L. C. Kitchen, two of whom were assigned to each session.)

I. THE MADRAS SETTING

Discussions at Madras centered upon qualifications and functions of missionaries. Relevant passages in the findings make clear:*

- (a) that the task is an on-going one.
- (b) that there must be a continuance of missionaries trained for specific tasks.
- (c) that they should enter into a partnership with the leaders in the younger churches.

Section X on The Place, Function and Training of the Future Missionary analyzes the functions as follows:

- (a) to be a colleague and friendly helper in upbuilding of younger churches.
- (b) to carry the Gospel into unreached areas (geographical and areas of life).
- (c) to witness against all forms of secularized and materialistic life. Attention was especially called to such urban areas as Shanghai, where representatives of Western life are found.
- (d) to embody and transmit the experience of the Universal Church, thus binding East and West together. Madras was, itself, a visual demonstration of the World Christian Community. No church wherever found can be a "local" church. It is a part of the World Christian Church and community.
- (e) to help build bridges between nations and thus further world peace.

All these functions require training for specific tasks and point to three inter-related fields of knowledge: knowledge of the Gospel, of the Church, of the people to whom one goes, their history, environment, etc. There must be training in character and discipline resulting in:

- (a) living conviction of the Christian faith, and a growing Christian experience.
- (b) sensitive appreciation of changing life among the people to whom one goes.
- (c) willingness to be a colleague free from superiority and denominational narrowness.
- (d) capacity to understand and appreciate people. Basic idea is comradeship. If missionaries are to be colleagues in service, so also they should be in training.

Considered from another angle, the world missionary movement is:

1. *Church-centered.* Missionaries should be put on guard against dangers involved in this emphasis, such as
 - (a) putting welfare of the Church as an institution above that of the people.
 - (b) overstressing clergy.
 - (c) undervaluing other agencies, such as education and medical work.
2. *Ecumenical.* Missionaries should be trained to appreciate strong points in other denominations than their own.
(Value in having advanced training in some common center.)
3. *Non-imperialistic.* Older churches not to dominate younger churches but to work together as brothers.

* Section III, 2 (p. 31), end of first paragraph; 3 (p. 32), 2d and 3d paragraphs; 4 (p. 34) 2; Special Group V 5 (p. 143); Section XII 3 (p. 99), last full paragraph.

In training candidates these points should be emphasized:

- (a) appreciation for younger churches and their leaders.
- (b) thorough understanding of problems involved in relationship of missionaries and nationals such as possible national and racial prejudice, and pride.
- (c) recognition of subtle danger that missionaries may be hampered under types of domination of leaders in the younger churches (p. 85, 4, last two sentences of last paragraph).

Much of the immediately ensuing discussion arose out of this last point on the areas of tension in the relation of the missionary to the national churches and their leaders. Some of the opinions expressed and experiences related are the following:

The idea of partnership is recognized but nationals have not the imagination to put themselves in place of missionaries, though lack of imagination is not limited to the younger churches. Many missions are not yet at the point where missionaries are assigned to work under national leaders.

Information was supplied regarding certain areas, as the South Sea Islands, where missionaries are being supported by the National Church; and Japan, where some missionaries are being directed by a joint body.

There was stressed the difficulty of the situation when the missionary is directed but not financed by the National Church. The question was raised whether it is better to send missionaries to become an integral part of the national organization or to keep them separate to reinforce national bodies. Examples of Mission Board policies were cited in exposition of the issue. This situation relates largely to the economic side of missionary life and thus raises administrative rather than training problems.

In considering the relation of the missionary to the National Church there is need to remember that there are three types of organization on the field: (a) those in which the Church is all-important and functions as a world-wide organization; (b) those wherein the missionary is governed by the mission; (c) the intermediate type of organization in some fields where the church controls its own ecclesiastical life and worship, and the missionary fits into that program, but where all other functions (educational, medical, etc.) are under a joint body of nationals and missionaries.

In the earlier situation the missions had too much control. In reaction to this the missionary has deferred to the national leaders as they have assumed increasing responsibility. Now is the time to develop a partnership—as equals.

How can nationals help young missionaries to get experience? Younger churches should be less concerned about administering funds and more concerned with helping new missionaries make the best possible adjustments and secure supplementary training.

II. NEW DEMANDS ON PERSONNEL

We should first take seriously three elements of our accepted convictions: (1) the best technical training; (2) thorough training in religion for all technical experts, as e.g., a doctor in a hospital; (3) adequate training in the background of economic, social and religious life of the peoples.

Relative to the new demands:

1. The missionary while the herald of the universal must work within the limits of the national scene, and therefore be brought into touch with the tensions of national issues, e.g., the shrine issue in Japan, conflicting political loyalties in India. Missionaries ought to be introduced to these with some consideration as to the attitudes to be taken. The answer as to what are the right attitudes is not easy, for there were differences of opinion as was evidenced at Madras.

2. The tremendous emphasis upon church unity: An honest reading of the statement of representatives of the younger churches in the Report (p. 130-1) means a retraction of some of our claims to harmonious cooperation without competition and overlapping. We must recognize the anomaly of sending out the missionary by a denominational agency and as a denominational representative, unprepared for this new emphasis in the national scene.

3. Another large emphasis at Madras (as indicated in Sections IV, V and VI of the Report) was upon evangelism as the process of winning individuals to personal allegiance to Jesus Christ. This presents another anomaly of a church that is not emphasizing the Christian witness and winning men to personal commitment—an almost non-evangelistic church in America—seeking to train and send out evangelistic missionaries. Preparation must include training in evangelism, even before professional training.

4. The missionary works for self-support of the National Church with his own salary secure and on a standard of living very different from that of the people to whom he goes. He seeks to get the churches to do what he himself does not have to do, viz., to raise their own support.

5. Missionaries are finding non-Christian faiths rapidly changing so that they do not present the sharp contrast to Christianity of a generation ago. The missionary therefore needs to know the depth of the Christian faith as well as the historical background of these resurgent faiths.

III. QUALIFICATION AND SELECTION OF PERSONNEL

There was emphasized first the need for the "creative" missionary. Recognizing the fact of many outstanding pieces of missionary work, we should be reaping the benefit of creative education in greater results on the field. Training to be creative implies also need of experimentation on the field.

Reference was made to special elements of missionary work such as contributed by Stanley Jones, Laubach, Smith in the development of the Ashram idea at Lucknow, Manshardt in the Neighborhood House in Bombay, Phillips in Johannesburg and others, as illustrations of creative methods of work demanded by the new era, but which cannot be foretold. We need people with initiative and creative ability, missionaries who are able to face all the complications of new problems without blueprints. For the work of the future it means selecting the best candidates from the schools and colleges. Creative work on the field and at home will be done by those who are doing creative work in school.

The question was asked if the time had not come to think of a joint appointive agency responsible for joint standards in selecting, training and sending Christian scholars for special work. (See pages 85-6 of the Report.) A joint candidate secretary was urged, possibly through the Student Volunteer Movement. Training in cooperation was advocated, but it was urged that we have gone as far as necessary in experimentation with the techniques of cooperation. In the period ahead united action is the next step. Cooperation must give way to unity (see Section XVI, p. 128f) particularly with respect to literature, youth activities and conferences, and evangelism.

Reference was made to the need of seeking recruits early, so as to advise regarding study over a period of years before appointment.

IV. TRAINING OF PERSONNEL

Taking as axiomatic that training of the missionary must depend upon his function, it was recognized that there are continuing functions along the familiar lines of evangelism, education, medical and social service, and that in the post-war world two functions that are new have appeared. One, because of the stage of progress reached by the younger churches, is to keep them in touch with the older churches, the missionary serving as a connecting link in the ecumenical movement. The other, growing out of the times in which we live when nations are pulling apart, is to fit the missionary movement into the needs of the changing world, and assist the worldwide fellowship to function for world peace.

V. THE PERIOD OF TRAINING

It was recognized that while the missionary's education for his job should proceed continuously without time limit, yet a definite period embracing candidate training, first term abroad and first furlough, came within the purview of the Conference. Discussion covered three stages, their training content, and the relative place of each in the whole.

The use of the first furlough depends so largely upon the choice of the missionary himself, dictated by his interest and his field activity, that it received no special consideration. Yet this was stressed as a most valuable period, for as needs were clearly known appetite became ravenous. It was reported that a particular desire for Bible study had been noted at this time.

It was recognized that the balance between training at home and training on the field would vary with what the field could offer.

In India and China, with organized language schools available, more could be attempted on the field than in the case of Africa. A caveat was entered, however, against losing much of this field opportunity by allowing missionaries too limited a period free from direct responsibilities after arriving on the field.

In the case of Africa, missionaries needed to become familiar with the language of the ruling Power (when other than English) and with its colonial policy, with the additional possibility of an academic qualification having to be secured in its country. This involves a training period (e.g.) in Brussels, Paris or Lisbon as the case may be. Similarly knowledge of Japanese is valuable for various areas in Asia.

It was recognized that whatever balance might appear desirable, there would always be necessary some training at home before going, if only to arouse curiosity in the new situation and offer an attitude with which to make an entry into it. Without a chance to develop a desire for acquiring insights into indigenous life, the candidates may never start this process on the field. A minimum of a semester's training was suggested, and agreed upon as of the utmost importance.

A short first term with further preparation and technical training during first furlough was proposed.

Reference was made at Madras to the Christian Ashrams in India as training centers (see p. 85 of the Report) and the suggestion was made that language schools alone, or as such, are not enough since the missionary must understand the hearts and minds of people as well as their language. Some failures of efforts in language schools at studying the cultural background were reported, with emphasis upon the time factor, the need of at least two years for study of language and culture. One of the chief qualifications of the missionary is openmindedness.

The continued education of the missionary on the field is very necessary but not sufficiently encouraged. There is not adequate provision for current books and inter-denominational bulletins for the continual re-creation and refreshment of the missionary. In India Gandhi's experiment and plans for village education are not getting the attention of missionaries that they receive from others because of the lack of provision for either the time or expense involved. Similarly Dr. Laubach's work was known by Congress leaders ahead of many missionaries.

The training of the group of new missionaries on the field should be carried on together, not by denominations.

We need new studies by missionaries and nationals of the type of school needed on the field, for the guidance of the Foreign Missions Conference and the International Missionary Council. On the basis of one such report, the Madras Conference urged a wider-based support for the Henry Martyn School of Islamics in India (see p. 141-2). Dr. Watson at Cairo seeks to build up the cultural studies for the Muslim world, at least for the Near East.

VI. CONTENT OF TRAINING AT HOME

In harmony with the statement on relation to function, two groups of studies were recognized as required.

1. Content Related to Continuing Functions.

- (a) Imparting the techniques of the spiritual life.
- (b) Training in spiritual discipline and acquirement by the missionary of a reality of Christian experience.
- (c) Laying a sound basis in theology, church history, comparative religion and the culture and religions of the people to whom the missionary goes.

- (d) A broad basis in philosophy to enable the missionary to be sufficiently at home in this realm to help others to clear thinking on modern issues.
 - (e) Religious education for a trainer of leaders.
 - (f) Practical problems of administration, with special reference to stewardship and finance and personal problems in management.
 - (g) Opportunity in seminars for contact with missionaries from the field.
 - (h) Training in cultural background. The missionaries who feel at home on the field are those acquainted with cultural backgrounds. For women missionaries, schools like the Merrill-Palmer School in Detroit arouse a much-needed enthusiasm for home education and inspire creative work in this field.
2. Content Related to New Needs.
- (a) Some knowledge of the doctrine of and values in the main branches of the Church, together with the history of the ecumenical movement in which the churches are now drawing together.
The expansion of Christianity to be provided as the historical background of the worldwide Christian movement.
 - (b) Christianity and international relations, with particular reference to war in the modern world, and attitudes taken by Christians in the matter.
The missionary must be the connecting link between the older and the younger churches, interpreting the new ecumenical consciousness. The "hot spots" are in the realm of international problems. We need to learn how specialists in the field of international relations can be provided. The Boards should allow men with special aptitudes to give their time to this special service.

VII. PERSONAL FACTORS IN TRAINING

1. Faculty.
- (a) Teachers must have a vital grasp of the Christian message.
 - (b) Teachers should be in close touch with the missionary movement, both through direct contacts with the Boards and through periodical visits to the fields, preferably spending a "furlough" year overseas at intervals, to see their own product on the spot.
 - (c) Teachers should know what the national churches are desiring with respect to future missionaries.
 - (d) Missionaries on furlough, and nationals as exchange professors should share in the work of the faculty.
2. Candidates.
- (a) Personality problems should receive attention in each training institution, that misfits may be eliminated in time.
 - (b) Candidates will need to be prepared for the testing personal experiences that lie before them on the field, both from the side of national leaders and of missionary colleagues. The missionary must naturally command respect; he can be helped in this by being prepared for some of the difficulties ahead.
 - (c) We must not overlook this necessary training in *discipline*. Language study is required and an understanding and appreciation of other people. The problem of self discipline will decrease as missionaries have more training in understanding people.
 - (d) Missionaries need to be trained to cooperate with national leaders of very inadequate training, experience and Christian understanding, and to react positively. Anthropological studies help toward an understanding of backgrounds and the making of allowances for imperfections.
3. Various Topics Related to the Training Period.

It was recognized that non-theological candidates (educators, doctors, etc.) should have training in theology, church history, comparative religion and the culture and religions of the people to whom the missionary goes.

A scheme was reported whereby over the first three years of medical studies (out of a total of five years required) there could be scattered two years of medical studies and one of theological.

Teachers have in some cases desired to utilize summer sessions for missionary training that, while gaining experience in the profession, they might take summer courses over a period of five or six years to add up to an academic year.

The question of missionaries securing some experience at home before sailing was considered, the following arguments being offered.

- (a) For immediate appointment to the field;

It was stated that experience was best gained in the conditions under which the missionary's work was to be done.

There was the practical difficulty in the way of securing experience, *e.g.*, ordained men could not easily receive appointment to home churches and then be abruptly pulled out for overseas service.

- (b) For delayed appointment with experience secured:

The greater maturity of such candidates, after the experience of relating theory to actual life conditions, was a valuable asset.

The appreciation of common human traits would forewarn against disappointing experiences as not peculiar to the missionary task.

The ecumenical outlook, it was noted, could be given in seminaries generally, apart from specific missionary preparation. It was reported that there were already offered in two seminaries respectively a course in ecumenics, and a series of regional courses covering overseas conditions (in the Department of Practics).

A suggestion was made that the Foreign Missions Conference give consideration to the document prepared in the United States on the training of missionaries, and also bring up to date the Bibliography for Missionaries.

Service fellowships or "externships" for study and observation on the field for seminary students in their middle year, combining some duties of a special sort with study, should attract candidates for future service. Some missionaries and theological seminaries are ready to experiment with such fellowships.

VIII. RESOLUTIONS

Two resolutions were carried unanimously, to be sent forward to the Foreign Missions Conference in June:

1. We ask the International Missionary Council to institute inquiries to discover what advance steps a representative committee (nationals and missionaries) in each major area would recommend as to the kind of plan which might facilitate new missionaries in understanding the mind, spirit and culture of the country concerned.
2. We request the Foreign Missions Conference to consider the reconstitution of the Board of Missionary Preparation.

CONCLUSION

Major points of emphasis that emerged during the Conference discussions were:

The quality of leadership needed.

The preparation of men and women in terms of partnership.

The development of techniques on the basis of personal Christian experience, with the ecumenical outlook.

A renewed commitment to and exploration of various centers and curricula, at home and on the field and in furlough periods.

The most important new thing is the discovery that we are all Christians in a non-Christian environment, and the necessity of constantly reminding ourselves of the ecumenical spirit. The problems are really the same, the difference one of emphasis rather than of kind.

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